

Chapter 6

Operations and Maintenance

1. Operations and Maintenance

The condition of the roadway surface is an important element in both bicycle safety and level of service. In general, due to their high pressure, narrow profile tires, lack of suspension, and need to maintain balance, bicycles require a higher standard of road maintenance than motor vehicles. Potholes, bumps, seams, and debris — which can be of minor annoyance or no consequence whatever to motor vehicles — are potential hazards to bicycle traffic as these obstacles can cause loss of control of the bicycle, or cause the bicyclist to risk conflict with motor vehicle traffic by swerving to avoid the obstacle.

For the above-mentioned reason, the roadway surface on which bicycles normally operate should be maintained free of potholes, bumps, corrugations, seams, unravelled pavement edges, gravel, glass fragments, and any other debris or obstacles that mar a smooth riding surface. The area involved includes the right portion of the outside travel lane plus any additional space. Typically, this portion of the roadway gets less attention as maintenance efforts are concentrated on the portion of the roadway used by motor vehicles.

Maintenance repairs in this area should be carried out with the needs of the bicycle in mind; i.e., they should be done in a workmanlike fashion with particular attention to providing a smooth pavement surface.

The following actions are recommended by the 1991 AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities as requirements in the operation and maintenance of bicycle facilities.

- Create a smooth surface free of potholes and debris.
- Eliminate dropoffs from pavement edges.
- Inspect pavement conditions - do not allow unravelled pavement edges.
- Inspect signs - making certain that signs do not intrude into bicycle travel space.
- Control growth of trees, shrubs, and vegetation.
- Supply trash and recycling receptacles and be sure they are regularly emptied.
- Mow areas in the vicinity of bike paths.
- Plow snow - do not use deicing agents.
- Enforce and prevent unauthorized motor vehicles from using the path.
- Maintain bicycle and shoulder lane stripings and markings.
- Establish an agency responsible for the control, maintenance, and policing of bicycle facilities.

Maintenance of roadways to accommodate bicycle traffic does not usually require changes in the types of maintenance activities that are carried out; rather it requires changes in the focus of maintenance practices. Where possible, maintenance, repair and litter removal activities should be shifted to include, not to ignore, roadway margins and shoulders.



The use of a shared lane will limit the amount of grit and debris that collects in the bicycle operating (lane sharing) area, as motor vehicle traffic will “sweep” this area clean. When shoulders are assumed to be the appropriate area for bicycle operation, it is essential to regularly sweep the shoulder area. All shoulders should be swept at least monthly. On highways where gravel or other debris can be anticipated to accumulate, more frequent sweeping will be required. This will be especially important on highways carrying a large number of gravel, construction or trash hauling vehicles.

